



SERVICES FOR EX-OFFENDERS

FINAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Services for Ex-Offenders was released on May 18, 2001.

Implementation efforts started in August 2001. Four persons chaired the Task Force which transformed into the Joint Coalition.

- Eileen Briggs chaired the Implementation Task Force from August 2002 to February 2002;
- John Rutherford chaired the Joint Coalition from February 2002 to Fall 2002;
- Gayle Alston was chair from Fall 2002 to Fall 2003; and
- Gordon Bass is now chair.

The Task Force was comprised of four subgroups. Joy Burgess led the subgroup focused on recommendations to form a coalition; Patrick Gaughan chaired the subgroup working with the Duval County Corrections Department; and Dana Birchfield chaired the subgroup targeting the Legislature.

Subcommittees advocated for recommendations from fall 2001 through winter 2004. The Task Force transformed as their efforts brought more and diverse volunteers together.

- Winter 2002, City applies for Going Home, a federal grant.
- Spring 2002 -- application for Welcome Home, a similar grant.
- Summer 2002 -- planning for Ready4Work Initiative.
- Summer 2003, City applies for LEAP grant.
- Fall 2003, City is awarded Edward Byrne Memorial Local Law enforcement grant.

Over the past two and a half years, over 70 people have been involved in the Joint Coalition. They have met more than 40 times in the past two years. They continue to meet monthly, monitoring the progress of implementing recommendation #1.

Results are as follows:

- 1. *The Community Services Department of the City of Jacksonville should collaboratively take the lead to convene a broadly based consortium. The purposes of the consortium should be to develop and institutionalize a system of linkages that ties together services available in Duval County for ex-offenders, reducing fragmentation and ensuring an effective continuum of services, and to advocate for effective service delivery and sufficient funding for these services.***

Active participants in the consortium should include the Corrections Department of the Duval County Sheriff's Office, Florida Department of Corrections, State Attorney's Office, County and Circuit Court system, Jacksonville Community Services Department, Human Services Council (major human-services funders), Emergency Services and Homeless Coalition, specific public and nonprofit providers of services for ex-offenders (including emergency assistance, housing, education, employment,

transportation, health and mental-health, substance-abuse, legal, and other services), the faith community (Interfaith Council and/or other appropriate groups), First Coast Workforce Development, and other interested business and community groups.

As its primary functions, the consortium should directly conduct or indirectly arrange for development and operation of the following:

- *a one-stop case-management center for ex-offenders. The “center” should be a conveniently located physical facility as well as a communications network accessible by telephone and on a user-friendly website. The Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) model of team-oriented case management already being used in Duval County should be considered as a useful model for the ex-offender case-management system. The case-management system should assist with access to all needed services through referrals and with follow-up to ensure that needs are met. When the center is up and running, the consortium should visibly promote it so that ex-offenders and services providers alike will be aware of and use it.*
- *a tracking system to ensure continuity of services from the time individuals become incarcerated offenders through their release and resettlement in the community. The tracking system should be comprehensive and computerized and should ensure access and use by all providers of pre-release and post-release services.*
- *a process to collect and analyze aggregate data on services for offenders and ex-offenders. This process should be capable of providing sufficient information to guide planning and evaluation of services needed to make them more efficient and effective.*
- *a major public-information effort to enhance public understanding about the costs of recidivism and the benefits of services to meet the needs of ex-offenders. The consortium should seek the active participation of all major broadcast and print media, as well as public and private agencies working with offenders and ex-offenders, in the planning and implementation of the campaign. The campaign should specifically tackle the issue of social stigma as a detrimental and self-defeating aspect of the community’s response to ex-offenders.*
- *an advocacy process for ex-offender services. This process should be pursued with sufficient vigor to produce significant improvements in services available and funding to support them. Advocacy should be focused, as needed, on specific services that are underutilized or not sufficiently available. Current examples deserving immediate attention include financial counseling for ex-offenders with substantial financial obligations, transitional housing, housing opportunities for sex-offenders, and mentoring services that provide ongoing personal support.*

The consortium should ensure that sufficient funding and adequate staffing are provided to ensure that the functions of the consortium are effectively performed.

The Director of the Community Services Department asked John Rutherford to chair the Joint Coalition which brought together bail bondsmen, corrections officials at the local and state levels, community agencies working with ex-offenders, religious leaders, law enforcement, a representative from the State’s Attorneys Office, concerned citizens, ex-offenders, and university professors. This group continues to meet at JCCI.

In 2003, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, Department of Corrections, installed a new Correctional Management Information System (CIMIS) to track arrested offenders and their charges. The Task Force was consulted during the early stages of developing this system to ensure that additional data fields recommended by the Coalition were included in this system. CIMIS allows corrections officials to list offenders to be released for the Jacksonville Re-Entry Center.

The Jacksonville Re-Entry Center (JREC), located at 535 Washington St., opened on Monday, March 1, 2004. Referrals from community agencies, prisons, and jails have been made to JREC already. The Center will have a resource library of employers and service providers who work with ex-offenders.

JREC will ensure continuity of services by using ServicePoint, a web-based program used by 40 agencies in Jacksonville. The database allows these agencies to track clients as they access services from various places.

While JREC does not offer case management services as outlined in the ACT model, it might as funding becomes available. Currently, JREC is partnering with the Clara White Mission's culinary arts program, which trains individuals for hospitality work, and also with New Hope Ministries. For ex-offenders who need basic needs taken care of, New Hope Ministries provides bus tokens, clothes, and assists with obtaining an identification card.

The City is currently building a website that offers a Re-Entry Services Directory, listing all the services available to ex-offenders in Jacksonville.

✓✓ Implemented

- 2. *The Duval County Corrections Department should take the lead, working with the courts and State Attorney's Office, to create a Pretrial Services Unit designed to expand use of and coordination of services available to local offenders prior to sentencing, including the full array of diversionary programs and alternative sentencing options available. Among its functions, the Unit should develop and use flexible payment schedules for offenders with substantial financial obligations (e.g. child support payments, restitution, fees for probation, and/or other fines and debts), based on each individual's income, earning capacity, and ability to pay.***

In the summer of 2001, the Duval County Corrections Department met with the State's Attorneys Office to establish a Pretrial Services Unit (PTSU). It opened in November 2001. So far, the PTSU has assisted 3,527 offenders who met bail before sentencing.

✓✓ Implemented

- 3. *The Duval County Corrections Department should conduct an assessment of each offender based on his or her sentence and individual needs. All offenders should receive a short screening. For recidivists and others clearly needing services, the Pretrial Services Unit should perform an in-depth needs assessment. Information obtained in these assessments should become the basis for individualized decision making about pre-release services and for planning to meet post-release needs. It***

should be entered into the consortium's tracking system and should be aggregated for analysis and planning to guide diversionary programs and other services, both pre- and post-release.

All second and third degree felons who are sentenced are now assessed by a Classification Officer. Based on the assessment, the officer assigns an offender to one of three programs: a work program, a substance abuse treatment program, or a high school completion program. At the Community Corrections Division, offenders begin a pre-release process four weeks before their release date. Although not as extensive, a similar service is available at the Montgomery facility and the Pre-Trial Detention Center.

✓✓ Implemented

- 4. *Judges in the courts in Duval County should take advantage of the case management offered by the one-stop center, when it becomes operational, by assigning ex-offenders to its services, when appropriate, as a condition of community supervision.***

Initially, the Jacksonville Re-Entry Center will not provide case management services. The grant written to fund it does not include these kinds of services. Director Gordon Bass, chair of the Joint Coalition and Director of Corrections is sending a letter to Chief Judge Moran about the Jacksonville Re-Entry Center.

✓ Partially Implemented

- 5. *The Florida Department of Corrections should instruct its probation officers in Duval County to partner with case managers at the one-stop center, when it becomes operational, offering assistance to ex-offenders toward meeting personal needs that ease their re-entry into the community, thus helping to prevent recidivism. To make this partnership effective, the Department of Corrections should seek increased funding to reduce caseloads accordingly. When they become available, probation officers should make full use of the consortium's tracking system and the resources available through the one-stop center.***

The Task Force decided that it would not advocate for an increase in probation officers because the state eliminated 500 in 2002.

In 2002, the Florida Department of Corrections hired Transition Specialists in its prisons. The Task Force met with Department of Corrections officials to discuss sharing information with the Transition Specialists. However, in 2003, the Transition Specialists were removed from the prisons.

The director of the Re-Entry Center is working with State probation officers in Duval County to advise them of the Re-Entry Center's services.

✓ Partially Implemented

- 6. *Both the Florida Department of Corrections and the Duval County Corrections Department should compile and provide to each offender released to the Jacksonville***

area comprehensive information about emergency services available and how to access them. The information should cover the availability, on an immediate and emergency basis, of housing, financial assistance, clothing, transportation, medical care, legal assistance, a personal identification card, and personal counseling. To reduce emergency situations, state and local corrections systems should release offenders so that they arrive in Duval County during hours when emergency needs can most readily be addressed.

All County offenders are now released during daylight hours, except those released on bail. Family members usually pick them up. All inmates sentenced in Duval County and released from the Pre-Trial Detention Facility are given an informational brochure listing agencies that assist ex-offenders as well as the JREC brochure.

It is not possible for officials in the state corrections system to arrange for offenders' arrival in Duval County during daylight hours. The arrival of the offender in Duval County depends on available transportation and distance between the prison and Duval County. In meetings with state corrections officials, Joint Coalition members will negotiate how Jacksonville Re-Entry Center services might be coordinated with pre-release services available to state offenders.

✓✓ Implemented

- 7. Case managers at the one-stop center, once it is operational, should encourage recent ex-felons who apply for Public Housing or Section 8 rental assistance to seek an exception to the federal provision that otherwise excludes them receiving assistance through these low-income housing programs.**

The Joint Coalition learned that exceptions to the federal provision are rare. It is unreasonable to expect that recent ex-felons can successfully apply for an exception to this federal law.

0 Not Implemented

- 8. The Florida Legislature should amend state law to provide additional incentives to offenders in state and local corrections facilities for educational attainment achieved while incarcerated, such as receiving gain time for earning a GED in jail or prison.**

The Joint Coalition worked to raise awareness of the shortsightedness of cutting back educational attainment programs. The state system has since restricted these opportunities. Local corrections facilities do allow offenders to earn gain time through their attendance at programs.

✓ Partially Implemented

- 9. The Florida Legislature should adopt a policy and provide sufficient funding to implement a major expansion of work-release opportunities for state offenders, since these opportunities provide a particularly effective vehicle for transition to successful life after release in the community.**

The State did not adopt a policy allowing for more work-release opportunities. This has been restricted since 2002 rather than expanded.

0 Not Implemented

- 10. The Florida Legislature and the Jacksonville City Council should follow the example of the federal government by offering tax incentives to employers who train, bond, and hire ex-offenders.**

Although no new tax incentives are being offered, the Corrections Division has compiled a list of employers who hire ex-offenders. The Community Corrections Division makes use of this list.

✓ Partially Implemented

- 11. The First Coast Workforce Development Board (WorkSource) and the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce should sponsor targeted opportunities, as a part of their career fairs, to meet the employment needs of ex-offenders. They should encourage local businesses to participate by identifying and offering job openings that will help ex-offenders advance in the workplace, replacing involvement in the illegal economy with productive employment.**

The Community Awareness and Job Development subcommittee met with leaders at WorkSource. WorkSource decided not to target ex-offenders for their annual job fair.

Congresswoman Corinne Brown holds an annual job fair in Jacksonville each spring. The Community Awareness and Job Development subcommittee is partnering with the organizers and Goodwill Industries to target ex-offenders looking for work.

✓ Partially Implemented

- 12. The Duval County Corrections Department should make substance-abuse treatment and/or mental-health treatment available, through local service providers, to all offenders found through the screening and assessment processes who need them. The Department should increase the number of beds dedicated for in-jail substance-abuse treatment sufficiently to meet the full need.**

The Task Force spoke with then Director Rutherford on December 6, 2001. At that time 96 beds were available for substance abuse treatment. Director Rutherford re-designed the treatment model and now the Community Corrections Division houses a 133 bed therapeutic community. Currently, there are no sentenced offenders on the waiting list for a bed. There are, however, a large number of un-sentenced inmates who have made an application for the program. If sentenced to an amount of time necessary to complete treatment and found eligible by both security staff and treatment providers, these inmates will be placed at the Community Corrections Division. The Department of Corrections is currently looking for housing for the Work Furlough Program. Once additional housing is secured, the Community Corrections Division will expand to a 300 bed therapeutic community.

✓✓ Implemented

- 13. The Florida Legislature should renegotiate its contract with Shands Jacksonville to provide for a more streamlined application process for access to indigent medical care. The process should allow use, to establish residency for eligibility, of a jail**

address in Duval County or a prison address in Florida with evidence of release to Duval County.

Since 2001, the Homeless Coalition and an attorney from Jacksonville Legal Aid have discussed the City's contract with Shands. The parties agreed that no suit would be filed. However, Shands and the Homeless Coalition will enter a mediation process aimed at arriving at a solution.

✓ **Partially Implemented**

14. The Florida Legislature should amend current law so that ex-felons who have served their sentences and have met all sentencing and community supervision provisions, including financial obligations, then have the opportunity for restoration of their civil rights, through a process that is timely and objective.

In June 2001, a month after *Services for Ex-Offenders* was released, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights urged Governor Bush to streamline the clemency process. One week later, he changed parts of the process. Felons with unpaid court costs and fines in excess of \$1,000 no longer require a hearing. All felons convicted of more than two minor offenses do not require a hearing. Also, all felons not requiring a hearing must fill out a questionnaire. Previously, the questionnaire was fourteen pages and now it is four pages. These actions are consistent with the recommendation.

✓✓ **Implemented**

Task Force Recommendation

The Implementation Task Force recommends to the JCCI Board of Directors that the formal JCCI implementation process for this study be concluded. Six recommendations were fully implemented, six were partially implemented, and two were not. A one-stop center for ex-offenders is open and assisting ex-offenders, the process for restoring civil rights has been streamlined, more beds are available in jail's substance abuse treatment facility, offenders are released in daylight hours, and a Pre-Trial Services Unit opened, providing needed services to offenders in an effort to reduce recidivism.

Joint Coalition continues to advocate for recommendations from the *Sex Trade Report* and *Services for Ex-Offenders*. Also, Sheriff John Rutherford has proposed a repeat misdemeanor statute (Senate Bill 1376) that has the potential to substantially reduce recidivism.

One of the findings of the *Services for Ex-Offender* study is that 65% of offenders have a misdemeanor charge. Senate Bill #1376 would require judges to sentence an offender on his or her fifth conviction to a substance abuse treatment program, if appropriate. In many cases, these repeat misdemeanors are offenders who have an alcohol or drug addiction and are arrested for trespassing, disorderly intoxication, disturbing the peace or another minor infraction. They do not receive treatment currently. Instead, they cycle in and out of our local jail, costing taxpayers at least \$764 from the time of arrest to the time they arrive in First Appearance Court. Based on the Corrections Division's calculations, 758 offenders in Duval County are arrested five or more times within twelve months. Their average length of stay is 17 days.